

BOOK REVIEW

Carabidae (Insecta: Coleoptera): catalogue, by A. Laroche and M.-C. Larivière. Fauna of New Zealand, Number 43, Ko te Aitanga Pepeke o Aotearoa. 2001. Manaaki Whenua Press, Lincoln, New Zealand; 285 pp, softback. ISBN 0-478-09342-X. Price US\$72.50.

For far too long the study of New Zealand beetles has been hampered by a heavy burden of unresolved synonymy, largely as a result of uncritical work by the early authors and an up-to-date checklist has become an urgent need. The present work now more than adequately meets this need for the ground-beetle family Carabidae.

This well crafted book opens with a popular summary of the family in both English and the Maori language and this is followed by a concise checklist of taxa, an overview of the history of carabid taxonomy in New Zealand and a perspective of the fauna, in terms of general biology, ecology and relationships with those of other regions. Then follows the Catalogue, which forms the main body of the work and provides comprehensive information on currently accepted synonymies, aspects of distributions and biological habits of individual species, with references to an extensive Bibliography. Line-drawings (by D. Helmore) indicate the overall habitus for representatives of each tribe, thumbnail distribution maps are provided for each species and the work concludes with a taxonomic index.

This is clearly more than a mere catalogue for here we have a mine of information on the biology of individual species, their dispersal powers and ecology and indications are provided in certain genera, where undescribed species are known to exist in collections. Much of this information is evidently derived from the extensive fieldwork of the authors, who predict that the current tally of 424 known species will likely attain 600 when the descriptive work is completed.

As would be expected for an isolated archipelago, the level of endemism is high at the generic (58%) and specific (92%) levels, but the main affinity is with the Australian fauna. However, the incidence of adventive species, evidently facilitated by human activities, and derived from various exotic faunas (some as yet still unidentified), is also a conspicuous feature; other such species are known to exist in collections but still await formal notification.

The present compilation has obviously been undertaken with great care, as befits a basic compendium of this kind and one looks forward to the surge of research activity that it will certainly encourage. Perhaps its only serious shortcoming is the absence of data concerning the extent and locations of type materials but according to the authors this will be addressed in a later publication.

Barry P. Moore
Canberra